DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 898 SO 019 323

AUTHOR Williams, Melvin
TITLE American Dream is Course Subject.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 3p.; For related documents, see SO 019 216 and SO 019 324.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Enterprise and Education; p3 Win 1987

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Course Content; *Course Descriptions; Course Organization; *Cultural Education; *Folk Culture; Higher Education; *Mythology
IDENTIFIERS *American Dream

ABSTRACT

In 1931, James T. Adams introduced the concept of the American Dream in "The Epic of America." Adams describes 'the American Dream' as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man." He also said that it was a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as men and women. A course based on this idea is now offered at American International College (Springfield, Massachusetts). Offered through the English department, the course provides a multi-disciplinary approach to this basic myth of U.S. society. Students read about the dreams of immigrants, entrepreneurs, minorities, and the religious. The American dream remains as a bedrock national myth; myth is what gives substance to a nation's values. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED295898

AMERICAN DREAM IS COURSE SUBJECT

by

Melvin Williams

ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION, WINTER 1987
Association of Private Enterprise Education
Hankamer School of Business
Baylor University
Waco, TX 76798

SO 019323

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
C. A. KENT

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AMERICAN DREAM IS COURSE SUBJECT

Dr. Melvin Williams

In Search of the American Dream is the title of a course to be offered again this spring at American International College, Springfield, Massachusettes.

Offered through the English department, the course provides a multi-disciplinary approach to this most basic myth of our society. Students will read about the dreams of immigrants, of entrepreneurs, of minorities, of the religious – all these and others whose quests add up to "the American Dream." In the process members of the class will also have the opportunity to reflect on their own heritage and their own dreams.

For more than ten years Dr. Melvin G. Williams, chairman of the English department at American International College, has taught courses on the American Dream. Last year he delivered a major address on the subject, for which he was later nominated for a Freedoms Foundation award.

Portions of that address provide the flavor of the course:

"Today the American Dream seems to be everywhere in the popular press, as a slogan at any rate. And however fuzzy its meaning can be sometimes, it describes well enough the national optimism which has been our hallmark for more than three centuries.

Although the concept of the American Dream has long been embedded in our national mythology, the expression itself is only as old as James T. Adams' *The Epic of America*, a best seller in 1931. In his final chapter Adams describes 'the American dream' as 'that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man.' Yet it is much more than 'a dream of merely material plenty,' he insists. 'It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as men and women.'

Is there such a thing, though, as *the* American Dream, or must we speak of American *dreams* in the plural? Is the American Dream best revealed in the radical individualism of Thomas Jefferson, whose familiar words declare on behalf of the nation that 'we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these rights are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness'? Is it political and religious freedom? riches? a single-family house in the suburbs? Maybe it is best seen in the television debates of 'Agronsky and Company.'

A simple answer would be that it is all of these and more. For truly there is no single American Dream but, instead, American Dreams. Not only is it true that its meanings cannot easily be pinned down, its very fluidity is significant. The Dream is large enough to have changed with the nation. And it continues to be very much alive.

....the American Dream is not a delusion, not a fantasy, and certainly not a failure. On the contrary, it remains as our bedrock national myth and it is very much alive. Myth, we need to keep in mind, is not a fairytale; it is not something that can be believed or not believed. It is what gives substance to a nation's values. For this country, the American Dream is not only a vision but a waking hope."

Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams....

– Langston Hughes